with experience and reading to assist him, knows what to put in and what to exclude, and his progress is likely to be certain and secure, because he always has a test whereby to try his works. Does he make a clever study from nature? Let him test its truthfulness by comparing it with the great works of the men of former times. Does he wish to avoid the mannerism which the study of the old masters is apt, if exclusively pursued, to engender? Let him test their truthfulness by going to nature. Thus he has always a countercheck, which those who rely, as I have often already stated, on *one* great principle, are sure to seek in vain.

I conclude, Sir, with the last words of Mr. Hope, in his celebrated Essay on Architecture, as what is there said regarding architecture, appears to me still more applicable to the arts of sculpture and painting, and indeed very much expresses my own views.

"No one yet seems to have conceived the smallest wish or idea of only borrowing of every former style of architecture, whatever it might present of useful or ornamental, of scientific or tasteful; of adding thereto whatever other new dispositions or forms might afford conveniences or elegancies not yet possessed; of making the new discoveries, the new conquests, of natural productions unknown to former ages, the models of new imitations more beautiful and more varied; and thus of composing an architecture, which, born in our country, grown on our soil, and in harmony with our climate, institutions, and habits, at once elegant, appropriate, and original, should truly deserve the appellation of 'our own.'"

AN AMATEUR.

INTERIOR DECORATION.

SIMPSON'S DIVAN IN THE STRAND.

WE have lately had to record several praiseworthy attempts in interior decoration, a department of architecture to which we have heretofore devoted much attention. Considerable talent in invention, along with great beauty of effect, have been displayed, even in instances where we could not altogether approve of a departure from what we have held to be universal canons. The natural sensibility to the captivating influence of colours in harmonic combination, is no longer forgotten in the arrangement of public places of amusement; much beauty of form is exhibited on flat surface or in relief, and in all respects we are reminded of the presence of the artist rather than of the house-painter and paper-hanger. The improvement which has taken place, within a comparatively recent period, we view with considerable satisfaction after our own endeavours towards it.

The large room at Simpson's Divan, opposite Exeter Hall, in the Strand, without thinking it entitled to any extravagant praise, is one of the instances we may refer to.—The room has windows at one side and end, and a bar at the end of the opposite side near the entrance. It is entered through a passage, tastefully, though somewhat gaudily, decorated, from the street, and by glazed doors from the passage, and from Ries's Cigar Divan.

The ceiling of the room is intersected by five beams, three being grouped together, across the middle. The beams are, it is to be regretted, somewhat unsatisfactory in appearance, as some of them are supported over voids, which however we remark without knowing what may be their structural office. There is a fire-place at each end of the room: tables are arranged along one side, and the other is divided into boxes. A sideboard occupies the centre, and there is a round table at each end. Long pier-glasses and console-tables are placed between the windows. The general tone of colour is light, and of a warm buff hue, relieved by red colour, and by ornaments in various tints. The soffits of the beams are painted with guilloche ornaments, and the coves by which the beams are united to the ceiling have the honeysuckle ornament, red colour—without attempt to give the effect of relief—being employed with good effect. The spaces of the ceiling are painted with ornaments, of rather poor character in regard to design and drawing, and relieved by shading. This ornament is arranged in geometrical compartments, similar in design in each division of the ceiling, which gives some of them rather a cramped appearance, from the widths of each division not being the same. There is also a greater mixture of style in the ornament than would have been desirable: but this is a common error. The dark colour introduced in some of the circular ornaments seems to us to be too dark, giving rather a patchy appearance. The walls are divided by pilasters, and are panelled in light green colour, with a pattern of lighter tint, the whole painted in imitation of morocco leather. In the centres of these panels are bas-reliefs, much resembling in design and material those in the Lyceum Theatre. These subjects are in ornamental gilt frames, oblong and circular, and are relieved by pink grounds. The panels are defined by gilt mouldings. The pilaster panels are painted with a pattern in brick red colour, to which some of our remarks upon the ceiling would apply. The furniture is of novel character,—the round tables being particularly good. Each of them supports a large gilt candelabrum of five lights, with figures grouped round the stem, and having female figures, coloured white, branching out at the top, for the support of the lights. The general lighting is by sconces of two-lights, each supported by a figure similar to those of the candelabra,—ranged along the walls. The chimney-pieces are black, with imitation of inlaid ornament. Beneath the sconces are seen serpents twisting from the wall: these, the use of which we should have long been in doubt about, the visiters have turned into hat-pegs. We may snatch this opportunity of again urging that in every design the purpose should be apparent, and that the design should be subservient to that purpose; but the true principle, in several extensively-circulated designs, seems to be wholly unconsidered. In the present case, the thing wanted was, simply and perspicuously, a hat-peg, not something which might be turned to that office, as indeed could, excellently well, the loaf of bread with a hole cut in it, or the bottle, which Swift recommends to servants as efficient substitutes for candlesticks. The judgment expects reason and purpose to take part in design, and is disgusted with what has been called by some one, the practical joking of so-called design.

To return to our subject—the general effect of the room is good, and though we have noticed a few matters of detail that unfortunately are errors which it is difficult to avoid, with the limited time allowed in works of this nature, the design is creditable to the architect, Mr. Friend, and to the decorator, Mr. Blackburn, of Grosvenor-street, Eaton-square.*

In remarking upon the general progress observable in interior decoration, we might notice the constant introduction of new materials and forms, extending the resources of the architect in buildings of ordinary character to an extent never thought of by our predecessors, although the mechanical reproduction of these forms is, in some degree, a loss to art, from its being rendered less incumbent upon the architect to enter into the consideration of all matters of detail.

In paper-hangings, indeed, there has been so great an improvement, by the introduction of patterns printed on separate pieces, so as to be applicable in combination for panels, borders, and for plafonds of ceilings, that the architect is now not altogether dependent, as in too many other departments of his art, upon materials such as are the best that can be had from the manufacturer, and which must, therefore, in all cases where small outlay is available, be used with all their imperfections,—but he can vary, adapt, and recombine, so as to exhibit something like design in the embellishment of an apartment. At the same time, with reference to paper-hangings, whilst, of those manufactures applicable to the purposes of architecture, there is no branch which so well exemplifies the alteration which has taken place in the vocation of the architect, rendering him the skilful adapter of designs ready made, rather than the originator of every detail—and, consequently, whilst giving him increased means of embellishment, rendering it an important object for him to attend to the progress of schools of design, and other means of educating the class of designers whose works he may be compelled to use; so there is no class of production in which correct principles of design are so important, or still so far from being perfectly appreciated. The immense number of trashy designs which are exhibited, is in some degree wonderful for variety, whilst hundreds may be examined without meeting with one displaying beauty of design, or good drawing and appreciation of the forms chosen, or skilful combination of colours. The want of early education in the delineation of beautiful forms is constantly observable in the great majority of the cheap paper-hangings,—although, as it seems to us, it would not be difficult to produce designs, even with single blocks, which should be strikingly original. In former volumes we have entered at length into the consideration of the principles upon which paper-hangings, and other interior decorations, should be designed.

* We should not omit to notice the design of the street lamps in front of the building. They are improvements upon the tasteless forms which are seen elsewhere, reminding us how wasteful we are of opportunities of contributing to the pleasure which is derived from looking at beautiful works.

THE GAS MOVEMENT.

IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

PEAL after peal of not very distant thunder has of late been vibrating solemnly in the ears of the City gas companies, and reverberating as loudly throughout the provinces. Not only have the City gas consumers buckled on their armour for a coming fight, but those authorities to whose aid and support in the struggle, as advised by us, they have appealed, are now responding with alacrity to their call, and vieing with each other for the leadership. Meeting after meeting has been held by the City Sewers Commission on the subject, and in the corporation there are strenuous advocates of the diffusion of cheap and good gas. Need we say that the arguments brought forward on all hands, both officially and unofficially, are either our own or corollaries on the facts we have industriously collected,—that in short the thunders of Guildhall and Bishopsgate are but the resonance of our own lightnings? We rejoice to think that it is so, yet a shade of that positive of which pleasure is said to be but the negative might have been spared us by something like *an acknowledgment* that we *did* sow the seeds which are yielding so hopeful a crop of argumentative determinations. As it is, we must console ourselves, we suppose, with the reflection that the vanity of human ambition renders it oftimes expedient, in its display, that *the nourishing roots* of its flourishing branches—waving and glorying in all the shiny lights and airs of noonday—be quietly buried, as far as possible, underground.*

We need not, even had we space, go over all those pregnant facts and arguments brought forward at recent meetings, official and constituent, since our readers are already well acquainted with their main features. We may merely record the result, which is, that on the one hand the authorities have determined at once to apply for power from Parliament either to purchase the pipes, &c., of the companies, or to erect works and lay pipes of their own with the proceeds of a gas rate, for the purpose of reducing the price to 3s. 6d. or 4s., at the utmost, per 1,000 cubic feet,—evidence being abundantly adduced to prove that even a less sum was sufficient; and that, on the other hand, the formation of a "Great Central Gas Consumers' Company" has been announced, authorising the city gas consumers to purchase works, &c. The city gas consumers appear to be suspicious of the permanence of the good intentions of the authorities, but if mistaken, they will doubtless come to a mutual good understanding, which otherwise, indeed, they may be said to have already.†

* In the midst of the progress made in town and country during the last week or two, however, we feel in duty bound to record at least one exception on the part of both press and people, in a report, by the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, of one of a repeated series of meetings at Chelmsford, where the gas consumers are fully imbued with the spirit of the movement, and at which meeting Mr. Wilder read at length, as the paper reports at length, from THE BUILDER, a phalanx of evidence adduced to prove, from the Companies' own returns, that reductions in price had ever increased their own profits, and, incidentally, that the local price of coals had very little to do with the local price of gas.

† Since these decisions have been come to, also, other districts of the metropolis are on the move. The inhabitants of St. Andrew's, Holborn, have already determined to "support the movement, heart and soul;" and, indeed, it is clear that no leader will be voted into authority, at the ensuing elections, who will not pledge himself, not only to do so, but also to exert himself with equal energy in the attainment of an equally cheap and abundant supply of water—a cognate object to which we have also repeatedly called attention—although we have preferred a perma-

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